



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO CONDUCT PILOT INSPECTION PROGRAM FOCUSED ON NUCLEAR PLANT ENGINEERING AND DESIGN ISSUES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is preparing a new inspection program that could eventually be applied to the nation's 104 commercial nuclear power plants.

"The program is intended to provide a more in-depth inspection of engineering activities, thereby improving the ability of the agency's current Reactor Oversight Process to identify significant engineering issues before they could impact plant safety," said NRC Chairman Nils Diaz.

The new program will focus on verifying that a plant's design basis has been correctly implemented for selected components that play a significant role in either reducing the risk of an accident or mitigating one. A pilot inspection will be carried out at four sites -- Vermont Yankee and three others yet to be determined. The pilot program incorporates aspects of existing and past programs, and includes:

- Devoting significant effort to assessing industry operating experience relevant to the components being inspected;
- Enlarging the inspection sample, which could now include components that could contribute to the initiation of an accident;
- Creating a more detailed inspection report that integrates assessment of any design/engineering weaknesses, and;
- Conducting approximately 700 hours of direct inspection.

An important aspect of the new inspection is that it will more intently focus resources on areas of risk significance and components operating close to design margins.

The NRC expects the pilot inspections will be completed in six to nine months. The agency will then review the inspection results and determine whether permanent changes to the Reactor Oversight Process are warranted. Additional information on the pilot inspection program is available electronically through the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> , by entering accession number ML040970328.

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